



COUNCIL OF DELEGATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

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Workshop Report Relations with Actors Outside of the Movement

Workshop Officers

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Introduction

The Chairman, Sir Nicholas Young, introduced the discussion by referring to the “three pillars” of humanitarian action described by the UN, in which the Red Cross Red Crescent is identified as a separate pillar, distinct from governments and inter-governmental organisations on the one hand, and non-governmental organisations on the other. A paper produced by the British Red Cross on Movement relations with external actors provided useful background for participants (the paper can be found on Fednet under Working Together→International Relations→Humanitarian Diplomacy). Each of the three workshop sessions was well attended. In each session participants actively engaged with the subject, bringing their own valuable experience to the discussion, as well as important recommendations for the future. For the first time in the history of the CoD, these participants included representatives of three intergovernmental organisations which have the largest amount of interaction with National Societies – UNHCR, WFP and WHO. The interventions of all three external representatives provided important perspectives from outside the Movement.

The Chairman spoke of the distinctiveness of the Movement. The starting point for that distinctiveness is the Fundamental Principles, the Geneva Conventions, their additional protocols, IHL and the specific mandate for action in time of conflict. The protective and indicative character of the emblem is another distinguishing feature of vital importance for NSs as well as the institutions, as is the auxiliary role of NSs, which underpins much of their external partnering. This role, accompanied by their volunteer strength and their reach into communities everywhere in the world is a special and distinctive characteristic of the Movement and was important to the workshop’s discussions.

The Chairman also described some of the challenges confronting the Movement in the external actors’ context. Many of these challenges are well known but not always well addressed: competition among an ever-increasing number of actors, diminishing humanitarian space and access restrictions in complex situations, lack of understanding of the Movement’s distinctiveness, pressure for funding and temptation to enter into unsuitable partnerships because of the money involved, the importance of maintaining distinctiveness in partnership situations, the increasing need to promote and protect the distinctiveness and, finally, the danger of competition between Movement components in these situations.

The workshop sessions heard presentations from six NSs, the ICRC and the International Federation, and representatives of the three intergovernmental organisations referred to above.

Major themes

The major themes identified through the three sessions were as follows:

- (a) The importance of defining who we are;
- (b) Agreements and partnerships;
- (c) Organisational development and capacity, especially at the local level;
- (d) Future challenges;
- (e) The Policy Framework – tools, training and greater Movement coordination.

A. The importance of Defining who we are

- NSs are attractive to IOs. They provide the branch network, the volunteers and the “last mile delivery”.
- IOs are redefining the way they work. They now recognise that they need to reconceptualise the way they work with national partners. NSs have the potential to be key partners in this new landscape.
- This works both ways, as we are also reconceptualising in a world where partnering is important. It is very important to ensure that our purposes are well understood by the media and the public as we proceed. Our identity as Neutral, Independent and Impartial must be at the forefront of that understanding.
- The existing policy framework provides a sound basis for acting in partnership with external actors. Ensuring a high level of professionalism and the preservation of the Movement’s integrity requires respect for this policy framework. The rules underpinning the policy framework need to be better understood, and perhaps captured in more user friendly ways. We need to better disseminate the Fundamental Principles, and clarify our role/mandate to other actors.
- Our identity as Neutral, Independent and Impartial Humanitarian actors (NIIHA) ensures humanitarian space for our actions. We need to act as NIIHA to demonstrate our commitment to applying these principles in practice, and to maintain our distinctiveness.
- We need to build our capacity to be able to partner with others at an equal level. We must work harder to clarify who we are, and to raise our profile collectively at the international level to remain an independent and strong player in the humanitarian arena.
- We need to invest in, and consolidate the trust we have earned with communities.
- We must ‘get our act together’ and maximise the potential to work as a Movement in order to raise our profile in humanitarian diplomacy at the global level
- We need to speak with one voice. We must give careful attention to consistent messaging, and to the fact that if something goes wrong in one part of the world it will affect perceptions and understanding elsewhere.
- We must ensure that our world-wide membership is brought forward in our negotiations and our work. Diversity is vital to this work now, and will be more important in the future.

B. Agreements and Partnerships

- Agreements are signed with organisations, but follow-through and implementation is often missing. This applies to NSs, IFRC and ICRC and there is a clear need to monitor implementation.
- Need for mapping the relationships, including the nature of the activities engaged in by external organisations with NS in the field. More mapping of what the NS themselves are doing, and what they need, is also required.
- It is important to remember the difference between humanitarian alliances and contracts. There is a place for both, but they are not the same.
- The importance of the evidence base. That is, the importance of producing evidence that supports the value of partnerships, and also evidence that establishes the reasons why certain partnerships are not working. It is important that our models and templates for future

partnerships are based on examples and experiences from the field, and not just based at the conceptual level.

- Agreements should be supported by analysis of the value which can be derived from the partnership. It is usually not possible to do them in time of emergency, so good planning and arrangements with the organisation in advance are vital.
- This makes it possible credibly to measure achievements.
- Agreement negotiation should include an analysis of the potential partner – are there ethical contradictions? How would a partnership be perceived by others? Does the partner have the potential to deliver its promises? What are the financial arrangements? What is the administrative burden for the NSs?
- This also helps us explain why we partner with certain organisations and not others, and helps our own senior leadership appreciate the value of the partnerships.

C. Organisational Development and Capacity, especially at the local level.

- We don't exploit our full potential. We are no longer just a delivery partner, but add real value and with successful capacity building can do much more.
- Our image, though, can outstrip our capacity to deliver. Trust in the Red Cross Red Crescent is high world-wide, and we have to manage our partnerships and our willingness in line with our capacity.
- There were some interventions on the difficulty in finding partners ready to invest in capacity building and longer term development (i.e. there is money for emergency response, but less interest in capacity development in non-crisis contexts).
- Important to recognise that these partnerships and relationships are often most relevant at the branch level. Strong support is needed there, especially because of the perspectives t local level strength can create.
- Volunteers are also key participants. It was recognised that volunteers are not always professional enough for the types of the programmes they are involved in. This recognition underlined the importance of professional volunteer management. The voluntary basis of the NS needs to be built more clearly into the business case we need to make. Better use of our potential will see us thinking bigger in the future.
- Volunteers and their place make it important that our alliances also encompass local level organisations, including those with a worldwide presence, like Rotary and Lions. Reference was also made to Oxfam and other NGOs who are establishing local structures. National Societies work everywhere in their countries, sometimes the only institutions which do so. This adds special value in complex emergency countries.
- It also underlines the importance of protecting emblems and identities. They are keys to our place as a distinct pillar.

D. Future Challenges

- The increasing involvement of the military in the provision of emergency relief raises special questions about the nature of the relationships this might require. An interesting question raised by the panel was whether the military might in fact be a fourth pillar of humanitarian response.
- This issue is also one of concern to many intergovernmental organisations, for they know well from their own experience that they have to keep clear of close involvement with the military as they work towards humanitarian objectives.
- There are guidelines in place for civil-military cooperation, but they are in many respects still a work in progress. This links to work being done, for example in Europe, on civil defence initiatives and the relationships these are creating.
- Auxiliary relationships received a lot of attention. Many suggestions were made, including many which emphasised a cautious approach because of the way these and other relationships raise questions about their management.
- NSs need to be careful about the potential impact of emergency partnerships on their structures, and conscious of the risk that new income streams can encourage corruption.

- External Actors know well the nature of the IFRC and its membership, and something of its strengths and weaknesses. It is important to be able to have frank discussions about quality, and capacity.
- There is scope for External Actor contribution to strengthening this capacity. Although there was a good deal of discussion about the new situation we face because of the multiplicity of humanitarian actors, it was also clear that as no one organisation can address all the challenges alone - the answer lies in intelligent partnering.
- Nevertheless, there is accelerated action by some international NGOs and faith-based organisations at the local level, and we need to ensure that we continue to attract the best volunteers and local support, and funds.
- At the same time, IOs know that agreements are not “one size fits all” and there will need to be more attention to this, and to ensuring that capacity-building is part of the agreement structure.
- Tools are important and the Federation and the ICRC should provide practical tools and guidance for NSs.
- The Federation and the ICRC need to be able to step in to help/support NSs negotiate and/or manage partnerships with external actors when needed, especially at times of emergency.

E. Policy Framework – tools, training and greater Movement coordination

The tone of the whole workshop was well summarised towards the end of the third session by a proposal that simple guiding principles be extracted from existing policy documents, including the Fundamental Principles, the Statutes of the Movement, the Emblem Regulations, the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures, the 2003 CoD Minimum elements resolution and the Federation Humanitarian Diplomacy policy, and brought to the International Conference for adoption.

The Federation and the ICRC will jointly ensure appropriate follow up to the workshop discussions.

The discussion recognised the need for better Movement coordination mechanisms. While there was an acknowledgment of the existence of relevant policies, there was a call for more specific training, coaching, and practical tools to help NS manage relations with external actors.

Proposed remedies – investments in the future

- Greater clarity about our identity and distinctiveness within the pillar concept, and investment in that distinctiveness ;
- Strengthening the distinctive quality of our place among the pillars needs to take account of the arrival of the military and civil defence as actors in humanitarian situations. This development presents new challenges and opportunities which the Movement needs to address together;
- Strategic and coordinated investment in organisational development and capacity-building relevant to National Society relationships with external actors;
- Develop a clear understanding of and response to the competitive environment in which we work, and of our own capacity to deliver in this environment;
- The reality check - careful attention to the process to be used when negotiating agreements and partnerships, including monitoring of and reporting on implementation after their signature and ensuring that they add value;
- High quality tools and guidelines to be available, and easily accessible.